

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system configured for processing a manufacturer's rebate that is provided to a purchaser of a product, said system comprising:

at least one electronic tag device associated with products made available for purchase, wherein each distinct product has at least one electronic tag physically connected thereto, and wherein said electronic tag stores product-identification-information;

at least one electronic reading device configured to retrieve information from said electronic tag;

a first computer in communication with said electronic reading device configured to retrieve said product-identification-information stored in the electronic tag associated with a product being purchased by a customer at a point of sale and for which a manufacturer's rebate applies solely as a result of purchase of the product;

said first computer further configured to use said product-identification-information to acquire rebate-claim-information so that the customer may receive the manufacturer's rebate;

said first computer further configured to communicate with a second computer and to transfer to said second computer said rebate-claim-information and wherein said transfer occurs substantially contemporaneously with the purchase; and

wherein said second computer is configured to process and validate a rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, and transfer rebate-claim-status information to said first computer, said first computer configured to communicate said rebate-claim-status information to the customer,

wherein said rebate-claim-status information is one of real-time information or near real-time information.

2. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said electronic tag device is an RFID smart tag.

3. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said electronic reading device is an RFID STR device.

4. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, further comprising a customer interface configured with said first computer to receive and communicate said rebate-claim-status information to the customer.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said product-identification-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) product model number; (b) product serial number; (c) rebate promotion code; (d) product name; (e) identification code; (f) proof-of-purchase code; and (g) an electronic address.

7. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said rebate-claim-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) customer name; (b) customer's financial institution tracking number; (c) customer's account number at customer's financial institution; (d) customer's mailing address; (e) customer's e-mail address; (f) customer's phone number; (g) customer's credit card number; (h) customer's debit card number; (l) a pin code; (j) an authorization code; (k) customer's electronic signature; (l) product model number; (m) product serial number; (n) rebate promotion code; (o) product name; (p) an electronic address; (q) proof-of-

purchase code; (r) date of purchase; (s) time of purchase; (t) product identification code; (u) product information; (v) retailer name; (w) retailer location; (x) retailer identification code; and (y) transaction code.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said first computer is further configured to generate at least one of (a) rebate status documentation comprising at least part of said rebate status information wherein said rebate status documentation is given to the customer at the point of sale or (b) a receipt comprising at least part of said rebate status information wherein said receipt is given to the customer at the point of sale.

10. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said rebate status information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) rebate claim accepted notice; (b) rebate claim denied notice; (c) rebate claim denied code; (d) rebate claim reference code; (e) EFT transaction code; (g) e-mail notice; and (h) rebate check number.

11. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said first computer is a retailer central computer.

12. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 11, wherein said second computer is one of (a) a manufacturer central computer and (b) a rebate processing center central computer.

13-21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, further comprising a portable customer computer in communication with said first computer a wireless communication connection for communicating said rebate-claim-status information.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 11, wherein said second computer is further configured to initiate an electronic fund transfer from a first bank account into a second bank account in the amount of the rebate.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said first or second computer is configured to transmit an electronic mail message to a predefined electronic mail address wherein said electronic mail message contains at least part of said rebate-claim-status information,

27. (Previously Presented) A method performed by a computing system having a processor for electronically making a claim for a manufacturer's rebate that is provided by a manufacturer upon purchase of a product, said method comprising:

receiving from an electronic reading device product-information stored in an electronic tag physically connected with a purchased product at a point of sale of the product, the product-information indicating product-identification-information;

acquiring rebate-claim-information for making a claim for the manufacturer's rebate available to a customer solely for purchase of the product using at least part of said product-identification-information, wherein said

manufacturer's rebate is a real-time manufacturer's rebate offer or a near real-time manufacturer's rebate offer;
initiating a data transfer of said rebate-claim-information to a second computer;
receiving rebate-claim-status information from said second computer after said second computer has processed and validated the rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, wherein said rebate-claim-status information is one of real-time information or near real-time information; and
communicating said rebate-claim-status information at the point of sale.

28. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said electronic tag device is an RFID smart tag.

29. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said electronic reading device is an RFID STR device.

30. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said first computer is a retailer central computer.

31. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said second computer is one of a manufacturer central computer and a third party computer.

32. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said product-identification-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) product model number; (b) product serial number; (c) rebate promotion code; (d) product name; (e) identification code; (f) proof-of-purchase code; (g) an electronic address; and (f) a URL link.

33. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said rebate-claim-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) customer name; (b) a financial institution tracking number; (c) an account number at a financial institution; (d) customer's mailing address; (e) customer's e-mail address; (f) customer's phone number; (g) customer's credit card number; (h) customer's debit card number; (i) a pin code; (j) an authorization code; (k) customer's electronic signature; (l) product model number; (m) product serial number; (n) rebate promotion code; (o) product name; (p) an electronic address; (q) proof-of-purchase code; (r) date of purchase; (s) time of purchase; (t) product identification code; (u) product information; (v) retailer name; (w) retailer location; (x) retailer identification code; and (y) transaction code.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Previously Presented) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said rebate status information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) rebate accepted notice; (b) rebate denied notice; (c) rebate denied code; (d) rebate reference code; (e) EFT transaction code; (f) e-mail notification notice; and (h) rebate check number.

36. (Previously Presented) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27 further comprising generating at least one of (a) rebate status documentation and (b) a receipt, wherein said rebated status documentation and said receipt comprise at least part of said rebate status information and is given to said customer at said point of sale.

37-65. (Canceled)

66. (Previously Presented) A system for electronically making a claim for a manufacturer's rebate that is provided by a manufacturer upon purchase of a product, comprising:

means for receiving from an electronic reading device product-information stored in an electronic tag physically connected with a purchased product at a point of sale of the product, the product-information indicating product-identification-information;

means for acquiring rebate-claim-information for making a claim for the manufacturer's rebate available to a customer solely for purchase of the product using at least part of said product-identification-information, wherein said manufacturer's rebate is a real-time manufacturer's rebate offer or a near real-time manufacturer's rebate offer;

means for initiating a data transfer of said rebate-claim-information to a second computer;

means for receiving rebate-claim-status information from said second computer after said second computer has processed and validated said rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, wherein said rebate-claim-status information comprises one of real-time information or near real-time information; and

means for communicating said rebate-claim-status information at the point of sale.

67. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable storage medium storing computer-executable instructions, comprising:

instructions for receiving from an electronic reading device product-information stored in an electronic tag physically connected with a purchased product at a point of sale of the product, the product-information indicating product-identification-information;

instructions for acquiring rebate-claim-information for making a claim for a manufacturer's rebate available to the customer solely for purchase of the product using at least part of said product-identification-information, wherein the manufacturer's rebate is a real-time manufacturer's rebate offer or a near real-time manufacturer's rebate offer;

instructions for initiating a data transfer of said rebate-claim-information to a second computer;

instructions for receiving rebate-claim-status information from said second computer after said second computer has processed and validated said rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, wherein said rebate-claim-status information comprises one of real-time information or near real-time information; and

instructions for communicating said rebate-claim-status information at the point of sale.

68. (Currently Amended) A method performed by a computer system having a processor, comprising:

determining by the computer system that a consumer is interested in a product;

transmitting to a second computer associated with a representative of a manufacturer of the product an identification of the product;

receiving from the second computer a first rebate for the product;

transmitting to a third computer information indicative of the product, a first price for the product wherein the first price accounts for the first rebate, and a second price wherein the second price is a price for a competitor's product, wherein the third computer is associated with a representative of a manufacturer of a competitive product; and

receiving from the third computer a second rebate for the competitor's product;

transferring to the third computer rebate-claim-information wherein the transfer occurs substantially contemporaneously with a purchase of the product

and the third computer is configured to process and validate a rebate claim with the rebate-claim-information, and transfer rebate-claim-status information to the computer system, and
communicating the rebate-claim-status information to the consumer, wherein the rebate-claim-status information is one of real-time information or near real-time information.

69. (Cancelled)

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68 further comprising transmitting to the second computer a second price and receiving from the second computer a third rebate for the product.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 70 wherein a sum of the first price and the third rebate is less than or equal to a sum of the second price and the second rebate.

72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68 wherein the determining includes identifying the product based on an electronic tag.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 72 wherein the electronic tag is an RFID tag.